

SATIRE 9

The Woes of a Gigolo

Tell me, Naevolus—why, whenever we meet, do you wear
a gloomy scowl, like Máršyas when he had lost the contest?
Why do you have the expression that Ravola had when I caught
him
with his beard still damp from brushing Rhodope's crotch, and I
gave him
the kind of thrashing one gives to a slave found licking a pastry?
Your face is as tragic as that of Crepercius Póllio, who,
though he goes around offering triple interest, can't find a
person
fool enough to take him on. Why, all of a sudden,
so many wrinkles? You used to ask little of life, and would play
the provincial squire, an amusing guest who would make
remarks
with a trenchant wit, urbane as anything born in the city.
Now all is changed. Your expression is grim; your hair is dry
and as wild as a forest; your skin has totally lost that gloss
produced by bandages plastered with hot Bruttian pitch;
hairs are sprouting all over your dirty neglected legs.
What does this mean? You're as thin as a patient in whom a
quartan
fever has long resided, ensuring a regular roasting.
You can tell the mental pain that lurks in a sick man's body;
it's the same with joy. The face derives its smiles and frowns
from within. And so you seem to have altered your style of
behaviour,
and to be going against your previous way of life.
Recently, as I recall, you would hang around Isis' temple,
and Peace's Ganymede, and the Palatine shrine of the immigrant
mother,

10

20

and Ceres too (for women are there in every temple).
 Aufidius himself was no better known as a hunter of wives;
 and (what you don't divulge) you would also mount their
 husbands.

'Many have made a profit from this kind of life, but I
 have had no return for my efforts. Now and again I am given
 a greasy cloak to protect my toga (rough and coarse,
 and loose in texture, thanks to the comb of a Gallic weaver),
 or a piece of brittle silver from an inferior vein.

30

Men are governed by fate, including those parts which are
 hidden

beneath their clothes. For if the stars are not in your favour,
 the unheard of length of your dangling tool will count for
 nothing,

even though, when you're stripped, Virro stares at you
 drooling

and sends you a continuous stream of coaxing billets-doux.

As Homer said, it's the queer himself that lures a man on.

And yet, what creature is more grotesque than a miserly
 pervert?

"I paid you this; I gave you that; and then you got more."

As he tots it up he wriggles his rump. Well, set out the
 counters;

40

send for the slaves and the abacus. Put down five thousand in all
 as paid to me. And then put down my heavy exertions.

Do you think it's nice and easy to thrust a proper-sized penis
 into a person's guts, encountering yesterday's dinner?

The slave who ploughs a field has a lighter task than the one
 who ploughs its owner. But you, of course, used to think
 yourself

a pretty young lad, fit to become a butler in heaven.

Will people like you show any kindness to a humble attendant
 or to a client, when you will not pay for your sick diversions?

There is the type to whom you should send big amber balls
 on his birthday, or perhaps a green umbrella in showery weather
 in early spring, when he drapes himself on a chaise longue,
 fingering the stealthy presents which Ladies' Day has brought
 him!

50

Tell me, my sparrow, for whom are you keeping those hills and estates

in Apulia, those kites which are weary from flying across your pastures?

Your Trifoline land with its fertile vineyards, the ridge above Cumae,

and Gaurus' cratered hill provide you with ample reserves.

(Does anyone seal more vats of wine that will last for longer?)

How much would it cost to present an acre or two to the organs of your worn-out client? But as things are, that child in the country

with his mother and little cottage and playmate pup—is it better

that he should be left in your will to a friend who bashes the cymbals?

"It's impertinent of you to beg," he says. But my rent is shouting

"Beg!" and my slave joins in, as solitary as Polyphemus' enormous eye, which let the cunning Ulysses escape.

He's not enough; a second will have to be purchased, and both of them fed. So what shall I do when the blizzards blow, I ask you,

what shall I say to my lads in December, when their feet and shoulders

are chilled by the cold north wind? "Hold on, and wait for the cicadas"?

Even though you conceal and ignore everything else,

don't you attach any value to the fact that, had I not been

a loyal and devoted client, your wife would still be a virgin?

You know right well how often you begged that favour—the tones

employed, the promises made. Why the girl was actually leaving

when I caught her in my arms. She had torn up the contract and was moving out.

I barely managed to save the situation; it took me all night, while you were wailing outside. The bed is my witness, and you—

60

70

you must have heard the creaking of the bed and the mistress's
moaning.

A tottering crumbling marriage just on the verge of collapse
has, in the case of many a house, been saved by a lover.

80

Why prevaricate? How can you frame a respectable answer?

Does it count for nothing, nothing at all, you ungrateful
swindler,

that, thanks to me, you possess a little son and daughter?

You rear them as yours, and you like to proclaim in the daily
gazette

the proofs of your manhood. Hang a garland over your door;
now you're a father! I've given you the means of silencing
gossip.

Thanks to me, you have parent's rights; you are listed as heir,
you receive whole legacies, and juicy bequests which celebrates
forfeit.

As well as bequests, you'll enjoy many another advantage,
if I bring your family up to three.'

90

You have every reason
to feel resentful, Naevolus. But what does he say in reply?
'He turns a deaf ear and looks for another two-legged donkey.
I'm telling you this in total confidence; so keep it secret;
just lock my protests quietly away inside your memory.
It's fatal to antagonize someone who smooths his body with
pumice.

The man who has recently told me his secret is angry, and hates
me.

He suspects I've given away what I know. He will not scruple
to use a dagger, lay open my head with a bludgeon, and set
my door alight. You mustn't dismiss or ignore the fact that,
for wealth like his, the price of poison is never too high.

100

So keep these things to yourself, like the council of Mars in
Athens.'

Corydon, Corydon, alas! Do you think a rich man's secret
is ever preserved? If his slaves keep quiet, his horses and dog
will talk, and his doorposts and statues. Fasten the shutters, and
cover

the chinks with curtains; close the door and remove the light;

have all the guests withdraw; let no one sleep within earshot.
 Nevertheless, all that he did at second cock-crow
 will be known before dawn to the local barman, along with
 whatever
 confections the pastrycook may have dreamt up with the aid of
 the carver
 and the chief chef. They'll stop at nothing in inventing charges 110
 against their master; for they use such slanders to take revenge
 on the straps. And there'll always be someone to track you down
 in the street
 and insist on befuddling your luckless ears with his drunken
 stories.
They are the people you ought to urge to keep dark the matters
 on which, just now, you pledged me to silence. But they would
rather
 betray a secret than drink stolen Falernian vintage
 in the quantities that Saufeia would swill when conducting a
 service.
 There are many reasons for living aright, the best one being 118
 that then you can treat with disdain the wagging tongues of your
 servants. 120
 The tongue is always the vilest part of a worthless slave. 121
 'The advice you have just been giving is sound, but rather
 general. 124
 What should I do right now, in view of my wasted years
 and the ruin of my hopes? As a fleeting flower, the paltry portion
 of our sad and straitened life is hurrying on to finish
 its course. As we drink our wine, as we call for perfume and
 garlands
 and girls—old age, unnoticed, is creeping stealthily up.'

Courage! So long as these hills stand firm, you will never be
 short 130
 of a passive friend to support you. From every corner of the
 world
 they all converge on Rome in carriage and ship—the fraternity
 that scratches its head with a single finger. A second and greater
 hope remains: (like others, seek out a rich old woman),
 you'll be her darling, provided you crunch up plenty of rockets. 134A

'Quote these cases to luckier souls. My Clotho and Lachesis
are well content if my organ provides for my belly's needs.
O little household gods of mine, whose aid I am wont
to secure with meal, or grains of incense and a simple garland,
when shall I net a sum that will save me, when I am old,
from the beggar's mat and crutch? An income of twenty
thousand

140

from a well-secured principal; some plain silver (a few little
pieces,
which censor Fabricius, however, would ban), a couple of
brawny

Moesian porters to take me upon their shoulders, and let me
ride serenely above the crowd at the noisy racetrack.

I would like, in addition, a stooping engraver, and also an artist
quick at producing numerous portraits. That is sufficient.

When shall I ever be merely "poor"? A pitiful prayer
without much hope. When Fortune is prayed to on my behalf,
she always stops her ears with wax obtained from the vessel
which was pulled away from Sicily's songs by unhearing
oarsmen.'

150